1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
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121 acts which represent and give recognition to existing social units. But apart from these official boundary markers, and perhaps even more important, are the "shared understandings" and the countless similar behavior patterns and similar material manifestations of behavior which characterize a people.

184 Among the cultural bonds which pertain to all Santal di-
• 773 rectly (as opposed to those which are exclusively the property of the various component social units of Santal society) is a myth of creation which comes as close to being an official symbol of unity and a constitution as traditional Santal society has attained. However there are numerous versions of this myth due to the wide dispersion of the Santal, and there are very few Santal who are in possession of more than fragments of a
114 complete version. Culshaw reports that the myth is better known
178 among the older generation and suggests that it is dying out;
773 several ceremonies in which it is normally recited appear to be disappearing in the Bankura District of Bengal where Culshaw gathered his data.[2] Since there are also lengthy accounts of the myth in earlier works,[3] one is tempted to accept the conclusion that knowledge of the myth has declined generally. It must, however, be taken into account that it was formerly the custom to find informants who could elaborate an "authoritative" version of tradition. Also, it is often the case among the Santal, as others, that older men become specialists in ritual knowledge, so that absence of such knowledge among the young may not indicate that the knowledge is disappearing.

773 Since numerous accounts and several versions of the myth
128 appear in the literature, only those major themes which are almost always present wherever there are Santal will be reported here.

[2] Culshaw 1949.

[3] Dalton 1872; Bodding 1942, originally 1887.

1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
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773 ported here. The origin of the Santal is attributed to a goose
192 (*hāṣ*; Hindi, *hamsa* = gander) and a gander (*hāṣil*; Hindi, *hamsa* = gander) which were made out of grass seeds (*sirom*) or lived in such grass. With the assistance of the deity known by the Bengali terms *Ṭhakur* or *Mahaprobu* or *Ṭhakur-Mahaprobu*, or by the Santali *Marañ Buru* (literally "Great Mountain") the two eggs of the pair became the first "humans," i.e., Santal or *hoṛ*. Like many other tribal peoples, the Santal refer to themselves as "people" (*hoṛ*). Since there were no others, these two, in spite of being siblings, had to mate. It is said that Thakur had to teach them how to make rice beer (*Haṇdi*) at this time so that they would get drunk since they were ashamed to have intercourse when sober, especially since they were siblings. There is often a lengthy account of the places to which this pair traveled, and the offspring they had at various places are named. Hihiri and Pipiri are always included prominently in these travels. The two ancestors are named Pilcu Haram and Pilcu Buḍhi (Hindi, *Hār* = bone) (Hindi, *Buḍhi* = old and/or wise), and they are said to have divided their offspring into twelve clans on the basis of various adventures. Sometimes these adventures are connected with the clan name and totemic food abstinence. The one occasion on which I heard a full account of the myth, unsolicited, was at a wedding, and it is clear from my inquiries that few present knew as much of the myth as was then recited.

171 The essential features of this myth are shared with the Ho
773 and Munda, two closely related tribes speaking related Mundari languages and inhabiting territories adjacent to the Santal, or living intermingled with them. Other points of overlap between the Santal and these neighboring tribes will be indicated in this chapter.

2; Skrefsrud M-5 (1870-1871) 1942 AW42 Santal AW42

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Marañ buru said to the two: Do drink this beer, all of it. He himself lay down there in this place, and he was singing to himself (a song in corrupt Bihari).

Other gurus have a more circumstantial lore, detailing traditional incidents and attempting to explain ethnological, also religious matters. The rôle played by Marañ buru is different from what is otherwise taught; he is here appearing as a kind of factotum of Ṭhakur, a spirit that should be in charge of mankind and be their guide. We shall later, when we reach what is told of the bongas, hear something quite different.

Kolean does not mention how mankind were divided into separate races. Other gurus have a story partly relating to this, partly also to the formation of sub-septs. The story runs: After the destruction of all mankind, except one pair, Ṭhakur guided this pair back to Hihiri Pipiri. Here they got children and these were divided into septs. Gradually this division proved itself to be insufficient; they could not all get proper mates. Seeing this Ṭhakur said to Marañ buru: Do persuade these men to go to the Khaṇḍerae forest to hunt; otherwise they will again turn as bad as they were. As we (it might be noted that Ṭhakur here constantly uses the inclusive plural) did not call what they did good, we exterminated them, the earth became empty, and we also repented. Therefore we shall not exterminate mankind, rather we shall again separate them into many septs. Marañ buru did this, and all men went to this forest happy in mind. He then divided each sept into twelve, and from that time they found opportunity of marrying. Marañ buru was given over to mankind, and he is ruling.

Then something again occurred to Marañ buru: He said to Ṭhakur: Again mankind have become very numerous; we cannot get further in the old way; therefore I think we shall make mankind into different races. Ṭhakur said to him: Very well, see to their wants, that they may live well and not be exterminated from the earth, and so that they will remember us; make them work so. Then he again acted on a thought and stirred up the mind of the men. He gathered them in a plain near a river. Here he made them cook all kinds of flesh, viz., ox-meat, buffalo-meat, the flesh of goats and sheep, of fowls and pigs, of fish and camels. He arranged all this cooked meat in twelve leaf-cups, and having selected one principal man among each of the original septs he called these aside and said to them that they should look at the leaf-cups. When they had done this he took them away as far as the length of three or four plough-furrows; then he said to them: Now run along from here, and whichever leaf-cup any of you may like, take that and eat. Start running from here all of you at the same time, and any one who can gain on the others, let him.

They ran from there, and the man who reached there in advance, he took the leaf-cup with ox-meat and ate its contents. At this time, it is told, he separated the Santals and the Dekos. They who ate ox-meat became Santals, and they who ate the flesh of goats, of sheep, and of fish became Dekos. At that time their language was also altered; they

2: Skreferud M-5 (1870-1871) 1942 AW42 Santal AW42

IX. RELIGION AND WORSHIP

a. Ṭhakur.

776 In the primeval age we had no bongas[1]. During our wanderings we have got them. The Siṅ boṅga (Sun or Day spirit) we also got on our way in Siṅ dugr (the Sun or Day pass). The primeval ancestors were worshipping only Ṭhakur. Having got the bongas we have gradually forgotten Ṭhakur; only the name is left. The people of the [178] present age have mostly forgotten also the name; only we who have learnt the story of the ancestors and a few old men are remembering his name. In the present age the Santals say the Siṅ boṅga is presumably Ṭhakur; therefore, when worshipping, they look towards the sun and call this their Ṭhakur; but our ancestors of old have handed over to us, viz., to us gurus, that Ṭhakur is different; he is not seen by human eyes; but he himself sees all. He himself has created earth and heaven, the human beings, the animals, the birds and winged beings, the insects, the snakes and reptiles, the fishes and crabs, the trees and plants, the paddy and rice, the bajra and Indian corn, all and everything, and he supports all, small and big, he feeds us all. He is the one who brings us here, he is the one who takes us away. By the word of the bongas and the mountain spirits or of a human being we are not born, nor do we go away; Ṭhakur has measured out to us our seer, and until this is finished, no one is able to take us away. As we are living here, in the same way we shall, when we have gone to the other world, get good or bad by his order.

• 773 The Sun bonga we call a good bonga: he brings the dawn, he brings the evening; he gives us warm sunshine, he gives us rain; therefore at the time of religious observances we appeal to him. He is the man, and the moon is his wife, and the stars are their children. The ancestors have told, it is reported, that these two, husband and wife, had very many children. The sons stayed with their father, and the daughters with their mother. Due to the heat of the sun and the day-stars it was felt like being burnt on the earth. The moon then said to the sun: We shall eat our children; otherwise humanity will be destroyed. The husband then said: Do you eat your daughters first; if the human beings do not get any relief thereby, I shall eat mine also.

[1] See Dictionary s. v.

2; Skrefsrud M-5 (1870-1871) 1942 AW42 Santal AW42

Then the moon (woman-kind, we know their craftiness) covered all her daughters up in a huge basket; thereupon she went to the old man and said to him: I have eaten and made an end of all my ones; how is it, the hot rays are not abating. Only if you also eat your sons, then only will the human beings be saved. In this way the old wife outwitted the old man; the foolish old man complied with what the woman said and really ate all his sons. It became night, O great mother, he saw them, all her ones are there. Then he became furiously angry, and taking his sword he pursued and reached the old woman and cut her; he might have made an utter end of her; but as the old woman gave him two daughters, she cooled him down a little. 773

Even now he continues to pursue her; and when he remembers her craftiness, he cuts her, month after month; only when the old man's soul cools down, the moon gets a little relief for a couple of days. The names of the two daughters, that the old man got, are Bhurkę[2] and the evening star.

As most of the people of the present age erroneously call Sid bonga Thakur, in the same way they call all bongas their Thakur when they make an invocation. They invoke them saying: Be greeted, Lord, Father my Thakur. In this way they are honouring them, in order that they may help them with pleasure; otherwise they are not Thakur; they are only bongas. 776

b. The bongas.

Among the bongas the Sun bonga is our great bonga. After him comes the Jom sim bonga; after him Marak buru (his real name is Liṭa), after him Jahĕr era, the Lady of the sacred grove (her real name is Ram Sălgi), after her Mĕrĕko Turuko, The Five (we certainly praise The Six, but we do not sacrifice to them), after these Gosăe era (her Ladyship), after her Pargana haram, after him Mañjhi haram bonga, after him the (Oṛak) House bonga, and after him the Abge bonga. Besides these the ojhas have separate bongas[3]; persons who wish to become rich worship Wealth-bongas[4]. There are boundary bongas, bongas of the hollowed-out water-holes in rivers, bongas of the water-pools, bongas of tree-roots and stumps, forest bongas, mountain bongas, and so on.

The Abge[5] bongas are numerous; the different septs have different ones; the same is the case with the House bongas[6] also. Those of the same sept are not the same either, while those of different septs also may be the same. The name of the Abge bonga and of the House bonga they do not make known to other people, neither do they tell their women-folk. 614 776 784

[1] The morning star, Venus. The word is borrowed from Hindi. [2] The names of the numerous bongas involved by the ojhas will be found in the writer's paper Studies in Santal Medicine and Connected Folklore, Part I, p. 64 ff. Memoirs of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Vol. X. [3] See Dictionary s. v. khoĕr bonga. [4] See Dictionary s. v. [5] See Dictionary s. v. Oṛak bonga.

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
AW42 Santal AW42

Muṇḍà-tribes are the earliest inhabitants of India of whom we have any knowledge. 174

The foregoing is a peep into the earliest chapters of Indian history to find materials to construct a rational hypothesis as regards the possible origins of the Muṇḍà-tribes. References from Sanskrit texts could be given, but we can perhaps state without fear of contradiction that no scientific data have as yet been unearthed by the investigators as may enable them to frame a scientifically tenable theory. One can easily form vague surmises on the basis of still more vague materials furnished by the early Aryan myths and Puranic traditions; but they leave the serious student of social history wondering if he is not really undergoing the labours of Sisyphus. So it is that historians take shelter under mystifying metaphors when they draw the "veil of obscurity" over the earliest epochs of Indian history. Others, the more assiduous, traverse all the quagmire and build from time to time, interesting theories to be pulled down again by later investigators like a house of cards. But still the search goes on.

We make no apology, therefore, to present before the reader at this stage an idea of the Santal theory of Creation and their migration from their original seat, for what it is worth. 773

We need hardly add that these are oral traditions, as the Santals have no written script of their 773 212 184

3: Mukherjea O. Y 4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
AW42 Santal AW42

773 own ; and although there are local variations in
212 different areas where the Santals are found at present,
184 they agree essentially in substance.

539 *Santal Genesis and Exodus*[1]

The "Hòṛkorèn Mare Hapṛamko Reak' Katha[2]" which contains the Institutes and traditions of the Santals, lays it down that man was created in the east, the land of the Rising Sun. According to them, in the beginning there was only water and underneath the waters soil. Then Ṭhàkur Jiu (*the spirit of God*) created the aquatic animals as the crab, alligator, crocodile, "raghòp'-boaṛ" (*whale*), tortoise, earth-worm, lobster and others.

Then Ṭhàkur Jiu said, "What shall I create now ? I shall create man." So he made men in dual form out of earth. And as he was going to breathe life-breath into them, lo! from the skies "siñ sadòm" (*horse from the sun*) came down and destroyed the two images.

Ṭhàkur Jiu was very sorry. He said that he would no more make men but create birds.

[113] 1. This was published in the form of an article in the Mayurbhanj Chronicle, January, 1938, being a contribution by the author.

2. With acknowledgements to Mr. R. Kisku Rapaz, Assistant Headmaster, Dumka Zila School and the Benagaria Mission Press, Santal Parganas, which publishes the book,

Jt Mukherjea O. Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
AW42 Santal AW42

calling "Thàkur Jiu' as "Dhòròm". Nabin Mañjhi, Headman of Chamardahani, Muruda, explained that Dhòròm is the Creator of the world according to Santal belief. Being asked if the deity is worshipped at present by the Santals, he replied that Dhòròm is invoked during all marriage ceremonies with offerings of pure water and nothing else. Closely questioned as to whether the god had any shape or form, he answered that he had none and was 'nirakar' (*formless*). Secondly, the Santals of Muruda led by Nabin Mañjhi gave us some additional information as to how the first parents prepared the first drink. This was what they did. Gòròm baba asked them to grind grass-seeds and later directed them to bring the water from a fountain called *tatijhari*, by drinking which the monkeys became drunk as it washed the roots of a plant named *rànu ran*.[1] [A plant of the name exists in Mayurbhanj and is extensively used in the preparation of hàṇḍia (*rice-beer*)]. Then these two substances were mixed together to make the drink of the first parents. Thirdly, we have seen in the foregoing account that the Santals, while at Hihiri Pipiri were divided into seven clans and it is only after their migration from Sasań beda that they

1. Rànu—The ferment used in the manufacture of rice-beer, Ran—drug (Dr. Campbell).

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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[P.63]

CHAPTER III

ECONOMIC LIFE

The Santal traditions are silent as to whether Thàkur Jiu, after Man's first lapse at Khòj kaman, pronounced a curse on them that out of the sweat of their brow shall they earn their bread as on their Biblical prototype, but had He done so, it would have thrown some light on the strenuous struggle for existence of the Santal in this mundane world. Food, drink, shelter and the luxury of a fire have remained to this day as objects of man's instinctive worldly cravings, and Santals though no exception to the general rule, and while feeling the pinch like others, try to hide everything under a smile.

In this chapter, we propose to give the reader some idea of the material culture of the Santal on the basis of our enquiries in a number of villages in the state of Mayurbhanj[1].

The first item in the daily routine of the men is to rise from their sleep with the first grey of morning. They then have a wash and may indulge in a smoke of "puñgis" (*a home-made cigarette made of sal-leaves*). Now their fields call them, and on they

1 The villages visited were Katsirsi, Andharia, Tursibani, Tentulbati (Muruda) and Tikaripara (Rairangpur).

3t Mukherjea O, Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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in his house. Ploughing, however, is an exclusive privilege of men; and women are debarred from it as a social taboo. The penalty for breach of this custom consists in a fine and ceremonial purification by the tribe. If you question a Santal on the genesis of the institution, he will tell you the myth that in ancient times when a woman first took the plough, the cattle in the yoke went on straight ahead and she could not make them deviate either to the left or to the right according to her will, when lo and behold, out opened a mighty river from under the furrows to the consternation of everybody.

In conjugal life, the women like their other Indian sisters are self-sacrificing. She will, we have already seen, eat last of all after feeding other members of the family. We asked a woman point-blank, "Why don't you dine along with men? Have you no such right?" "Our rights are equal," she answered with a genial smile, "but we choose not to exercise it." The way, however, she exercises her equal rights impresses one so much that the old Sirdar of Muruda, Mayurbhanj, was definitely of opinion that the Santal women work more than their male partners.

The equality of status, the woman claimed for her, extends to the drinking cup as well; but a distinction was drawn by her paradoxically enough when she blurted out, "We drink like men but do

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and she happens to be late by half-an-hour, she will smile and show you the sun, saying "I won't work. I am late." "But you may be late and still you may work," you may protest. "A day is being lost for you." "*Baṅ*," she will quietly answer. "*Baṅ*" means 'No' and Santal traditions are silent if Ṭhàkur Jiu taught them during the days of Pilcu Haṛam and Pilcu Buḍhi, "Don't yield after saying *Baṅ*."

562 461 [192] [193] [577]

Tribal Division

614

We have already seen that the clans mentioned number twelve according to Santal traditions, referred to at length in the first chapter. Now let us place side by side the names of these clans as investigated by ethnologists of repute and workers amongst the Santals, maintaining, so far as possible, the spellings as adopted by them, together with our list obtained from Mayurbhanj.

The task of finding out the meanings of the clan names is a difficult but interesting task facing an ethnologist. In the previous pages we have already given the reader an idea of the genesis of the clan-names according to tradition. Old Santals, when questioned at Mayurbhanj, gave conflicting versions of the popular tradition. But the meaning of at least a few of them are very clear. Thus "Hansdak'," certainly refers to the goose. "Hans"

[192]

[TEXT CONTINUED ON PAGE 101]

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614 *species of snake*) is their prohibited food, because this is the third meaning of the Santal *Murum*.

614
• 973 The mythical origin of sub-clans of this clan was thus narrated to us by Mr. Ananta Mañjhi, Sub-Inspector of Police, Mayurbhanj. Prefacing his story with the assertion that the name *Murmu* originated from a Nil gae, he said, "There were some men in a jungle one of whom was sleeping under a tree. A "Nil gae" chanced to run over him and he died. The rest chased the animal and killed it. (1) The men who chased and killed it were called "Khedwar Murmu" (2) Those who cut the bones of the animal came to be known as Samak' Murmu. (*samak'* means to cut).[1] (3) The men who caught hold of the tail of the animal were known as "Nej Murmu" (Nej = *tail*).[2] (4) Some who were resting under a tree nearby had the nomenclature of "Obòr Murmu" (*Obòr* means to *lie down*). Those who decorated themselves with Campa flowers at that time were named "Campa Baha Murmu." (6) The persons whose foreheads were stained with the blood of the animal at the time of cutting and chopping the meat were called "Ṭikà Murmu."

[192]

1. Samak' = to chop, to hack, to chop off or up. Vide Dr. Campbell's Dictionary, page 574. (Santali to English).

2. Dr. Campbell's Dictionary does not contain this word. It is a common enough expression borrowed from the Hindus.

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(7) Some who prepared the leaf-plates (called *Khalla*, in Mayurbhanj) came to be known as "Khalla Murmu." He gave us the names of four more sub-clans, "Biṭòl Murmu," "Sona Murmu," "Chunel Murmu," but could not throw any more light on their origin.

Whatever their origin might be the *Murmus*, as we found them in Mayurbhanj, formed themselves into the following sub-clans:—

(i) Nij Murmu or Nej Murmu.

(ii) Biṭòl Murmu:—About their origin, we were told that one man had five sons and a daughter. Now the brothers went to visit their sister when she gave them a dish of "murum" meat (*Nil gae*). We learn that four of them ate the meal and lost caste (*Biṭòl* = any one who loses caste); while the one who did not, came to be known as Nij Murmu, whose descendants even to this day, salute a "murum" (Nil gae) when they chance to see one. Well-informed Santals told us that the "Biṭòl Murmus" eat the flesh of *Nil gae*.

(iii) Samak' Murmu.

(iv) Ṭikà Murmu:—Those who apply "ṭikà" (*a mark*) on their foreheads like Brahmins. Mr. Raghunath Mañjhi, a Santal school teacher of Rairangpur, Mayurbhanj, told us that Ṭikà Murmus are prohibited from eating the meat of "murum."

(v) Khalla Murmu (*Khalla*, a kind of leaf-cup).

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The chief presiding deity of the Santals is "Maraṅ Buru." ('Maraṅ' means great, and 'Buru,' hill). Literally, he is the Great Mountain of the Santal traditions, noted in the first chapter. It is said that he possesses the widest possible powers and is associated both with good and mischievous godlings. He must be offered a white fowl, and if a goat is offered, it too must be white and uncastrated. He should be propitiated with a liberal offer of rice-beer during all Santal festivals, and birth, death and marriage ceremonies in the tribe.

Another village-deity is "Mòmènko Turuiko" (Lit. the five-six), who is now a single entity, but addressed in the plural (the suffix *ko* indicates plurality). The Santals believe that they were five brothers (*Mòmèn* = five) who were wedded to six sisters named Dangi, Pungi, Hisi, Dumui, Chita and Kapra. (Turui = six). They are supposed to preside over the welfare of the village. His younger sister, "Gosane era," constitutes a separate deity of the *Jahèrthan* (Holy Grove), and is offered worship in a different hut. "Jahèr era," another sister of "Mòmènko" is the goddess of *Jahèrthan* (Holy Grove) named after her. She has a stone assigned as her symbol. The Santals woship her for the general welfare of the village, so that their children may have good health, crops may grow in plenty and youths and maids of the tribe may be

4: Biswas, D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
AW42 Santal AW42
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Bhakar are properly mixed, it is all put into the brewing pot generally in the evening. The contents in the pot are covered with a leaf plate to press the rice. And over it is put an earthen-ware lid. The brewing pot is then put aside in a place where people do not go often. The rice takes seven or eight days to ferment in winter whereas in summer four or five days. Cold water may be added until the pot is full. The beer looks milky and a little brownish in colour. It has a peculiar acid sweet smell, any one who has drunk a little may be detected by the smell from a considerable distance. 273

Before drinking the beer libations are made to Maran Buru the principal godling, and to the ancestors one after the other. It is done by pouring a little beer on to the floor inside the house. When the first brew is finished, fresh hot water is again poured on the rice, and this is called doja handi (second brew beer), it is not so strong as the first one. [782]

To prepare wine from Mowa[1] fruit, they place two earthen pots one above the other, the base of the second one is perforated and above it another earthen pot is placed in which water is poured. Below the surface of the second pot a bamboo pipe is fixed. In the first pot mowa fruits and water are put and left for four or five days. Then they boil the ingredients, when the steam rises into the second pot, and coming in contact with third pot, it becomes liquid and through the bamboo pipe it trickles out, and falls in a pot which is kept for this purpose. This liquid is the wine which they drink. But now-a-days the government does not permit them to distil liquor any more. The Santal traditions suggest that their first parents were taught to [773]

1 [Erratum: this should read "Mowa." Cf. errata sheet, category 116, p. ix -- Analyst]

4; Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
AW42 Santal AW42
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273 brew beer by Maran Buru who came to them and told them he was their grand father.

276 **Smoking** :- The Santals are inveterate smokers. The indigenous method of smoking is to take some pieces of dried tobacco leaves, wrap them in a sal leaf, and smoke it like a cheroot. But now a days machine [178] made cigarettes have made their appearance. The manner in which tobacco is most commonly used, is by chewing dried tobacco with lime. Hookas (hubble bubble) have also been introduced among them.

231 **Domesticated Animals** :- Dog is the most important animal to the Santals. Every Santal keeps at least one dog. The chief object of keeping this animal is for hunting though no special breed of dog is kept. They keep cows for milk and oxen to draw ploughs. They sometimes eat their flesh. Buffaloes they keep for above mentioned purposes. Goats and sheep are kept for trade and for food. Pigs are kept by the Santals in large quantity exclusively for food, and these animals do most of the scavenging. They feed them and also let them off to wallow here and there. In the evening they keep these animals in a small room specially prepared for them within the room where they keep cows and buffaloes, a small door is kept which the owner opens every morning before dawn to let the pigs out. Cats are kept by the Santals exclusively to catch rats. Fowls and pigeons increase and multiply apparently without any care being taken of them. They are also scavengers of the village. The Santals keep them to eat and to sacrifice them to their Bongas.

4: Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
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their houses, and they shut the doors tight and allow no smoke to escape. 614 184 782

MAL SUB-SEPT.

They may not utter the word Mal when engaged in any religious ceremony or when sitting on a panchayat to determine any tribal question. 614 184

JIHU SUB-SEPT

They may not kill or eat the Jihu or babbler bird, nor may they wear a particular sort of garland known as Jihu Mala from the resemblance which it bears to the babbler's eggs. The Jihu is said to have guided the ancestor of the sept to water when he was dying of thirst in the forest. [825] [773]

SANKH SUB-SEPT

They may not wear shell necklace or ornaments and are forbidden to eat, carry, cut, or use shell.

JUGI SUB-SEPT

They smear their foreheads with vermilion at the harvest festival and go round asking alms of rice. With the rice thus collected they make cakes which they offer to the gods. 614 184 302 782

MANJHIKHIL SUB-SEPT

The members of this sub-sept are descended from the Manjhi (headman of a village) . e., their ancestor was a Manjhi. 614 184

NAIKEKHIL SUB-SEPT.

The members of this sub-sept claim descent from a village priest.

4: Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
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614 None of these appear to be associated with the idea of culture heroes as amongst the Amerindians. [538] The folk-lore shows indeed some stories centering round the plants (betel-palm, Panjaun tree, Sabai grass) and animals (tiger, jackal, leopard, crab). Besides these some of the clans' names centre round industrial objects and articles of usefulness such as chain, earthen vessel, etc. These would be more in line with a belief in objects possessing mana and venerated as such and gradually getting associated with exogamous subdivisions which might have had a hand in the invention or diffusion of those useful objects. There is no [796] seasonal recurring ceremonial round these objects meant for the preservation or propogation of the animals or plants venerated as ancestors, as in Australia. There [784] is indeed some taboo in the use by the particular subclan of the plant and animal venerated as its ancestor. The animal and plant thus venerated are taboo to the clans; none can hunt it, nor can they partake of its flesh. But because of the observation of this taboo the Santals are in no sense plant and animal worshippers. [796] It seems that their idea of bongas inhabiting all creeks and corners of nature, has been extended only to the region of certain animals and plants. In the folklore • [793] the bongas are generally represented as using seats of [825] hooded cobras and certain serpents are naturally vene- [262] rated as clan-ancestors; on the other hand, the common water-snake (Dhamna) is eaten by almost all the Santals. Of the animals not eaten by the Santals all are not associated with clan-names such as the Frog, Gibbon, Elephant, Dog, etc.

791 If the religion of the Santals may thus be described 796 as veneration of a Supreme Being and reverential awe

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his courtyard after the midday meal used to make sure of rising at the right time by telling his children to waken him when the shadows had reached a certain spot.

During the night the time is indicated not only by the position of the moon but also by the stars, and particularly by reference to the constellation Pleiades. There are at least two myths relating to the sun and the moon. In the one the sun is male and the moon female, while the stars are their children. The absence of the stars from the sky in daytime is explained by a story that they made a pact to eat their children. The sun carried out the bargain and so there are no stars visible by daylight, but the moon evaded her promise and so some of the children survived. The other version says that both the sun and the moon are male; they became related to each other by marrying each other's sisters. Only a few of the stars and constellations are named. The Pleiades have the same name as one of the clans; the Milky Way is known as the "cow track", and the Great Bear is the "old woman's bed".

Between the harvest and the Spring festival, a period which corresponds with the cold weather, the villages present a deserted appearance, due to the annual migration to the east for work in the harvest fields of the Ganges delta. This seasonal migration, dictated by economic necessity, plays an important part in the life of the area. Farther to the north many Santals work in the coal-mines round Asansol, while to the south labour is drawn to the great steel town of Tatanagar. In this area migration to industrial centres is rare; the Santals regard the conditions in industrial towns as highly dangerous to health, and they affirm that nothing will induce them to go there. The same reason, however, does not prevent them from leaving their own villages in a non-malarious tract of country for the malarious rice-growing areas farther east, in consequence of which the money earned is often more than spent in the expenses of protracted illness and long periods of idleness. Each village organizes its own party of migrants, who go to work for the same masters year after year. The wages they receive are more than double what is paid in their own locality, and so they earn the money required to pay rent, to meet social expenditure for marriages, and to pay off old debts. The homes are left in charge of the aged, and some of the children are left behind. The villages are denuded of able-bodied men and women, apart from a few who do not need to go. Family parties travel together, babies and very young children being carried

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preparing the cakes which the men take with them at the time of the hunt. The flowers have a high sugar content, and their most common use is in the distillation of spirits, the *paura* or brandy of the Santals. The work of distilling is carried on by one or two families in the village, and they sell not only to their fellow villagers, but they operate illegal liquor shops on market days. *Matkom* beer, a drink which is only slightly fermented, as it is prepared within twenty-four hours, is refreshing, but it is used chiefly for the purpose of counteracting the after-effects of a drinking bout.

The women prepare the rice beer which is brewed in all the homes. First they collect the roots that are used as fermenting agents from the forest. In this, as in most of their gathering activities, the women of the village work together. There is a certain ceremonial attached to the gathering of these roots. Parties sometimes consist of women from more than one village, and so a day for the expedition has to be fixed. The procedure suggests that this is regarded as the women's counterpart to the hunt. Before the wood is entered one of the older women invokes *Gösäl* ("Lord", a general term used in addressing the spirits) and requests that they be led quickly to the places where they will find the desired plants. The first woman to light upon one falls on the ground, pretending to be drunk. These roots are known by the general name of *rənu ran*, "medicine of medicines". It takes three days for the beer to mature or "cook". It cannot be stored, so it is brewed fresh for festival occasions and also in the majority of houses as often as the family can afford. *Handi*, or rice beer, occupies an important place in the ritual as well as in the social life of the tribe. It is essential for all libations to the spirits. A myth relates how the secret of brewing beer was imparted to the first human beings by the chief spirit of the Santals himself. It is therefore the indispensable Santal drink. It is extremely difficult for a Santal to understand not only how a person can live without beer, but why he should try to do so. The case of Pitam, who lived near Benachapra, illustrates this. He was a man of great influence because of his powers as a witch-finder. He had, however, abandoned some of his tribal ways, and, influenced by Vaishnava Hinduism, he had given up meat eating and the drinking of intoxicants. During the annual tribal council some of his enemies charged him with undermining Santal society, and one of the counts against him was that by abstaining from beer he was doing harm to the spirits.

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CHAPTER 6

MYTHS AND THE CLAN ORGANIZATION

MANY of the social activities of the Santals are based on myths, and the strength of their clan organization is due in no small measure to its foundations in mythology. An examination of the intimate relationship between the two bears out the truth of such a statement as: "The sacred lore of the tribe is not a fanciful tale told in explanation of natural phenomena and inexplicable events, but a method of expressing certain ways of thinking and feeling about the facts of life and of regulating human actions."[1] When for any reason a piece of ritual associated with a myth falls into disuse, knowledge of that myth begins to die out; conversely, when the myth is looked upon as outmoded, the activity with which it is linked begins to lose its hold on the people's imagination. The Santal story of the origin of man and the division of the human race into clans does not appear to be known today in more than outline form, except by a very few, mostly of the older generation. It is recited in the village only on certain occasions—the *caco chatiar* ceremony, at which a child is formally admitted into the privileges of full membership in the tribe; the *Jom Sim* festival, an occasional clan celebration; and the *Karam* festival, which is an affair of the village. None of these institutions has a vigorous life in the area; the *caco chatiar* ceremony of today retains only a vestige of its ancient glory, the *Jom Sim* is very rarely performed, and the same is true of the *Karam* in its full form.[2] The village headman has to recite the myth, but not every headman now is capable of doing so. The decay of the ritual is leading to the disappearance of the ancient myth. It is nevertheless still true that these stories do reveal the Santal view of the world. When they are told they call forth assent, and frequently in ordinary conversation the myths are cited in order to point a moral or clinch an argument. Though there are few who are ready to recite the whole story, some part of it is still familiar to everyone.

The Santal story of the origin of man has been recorded in slightly varying form by different authorities.[3] It did not escape

[1] E. O. James, *Comparative Religion*, Methuen, 1938, p. 335.
[2] Further reference is made to these festivals in the chapter on "Festivals".
[3] The fullest account in English is in *Traditions and Institutions of the Santals*, translated with notes and additions by P. O. Bodding from the Santali text published in 1887 by L. O. Skrefsrud, edited (after the translator's death) by Sten Konow. Oslo, 1942.

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the attention of Sir James Frazer, who quoted the account written by the Rev. A. Campbell in *The Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society* (1916). Frazer found in the story confirmation of his thesis: "This Santal story of the origin of man combines the principles of creation and evolution, for according to it mankind is ultimately derived from two images, which were modelled in human form out of froth or damp clay, but were afterwards accidentally transformed into birds, from whose eggs the first man and woman of flesh and blood were hatched."[1]

The following account, written down in the Sarenga area by an old man who could not have had access to any of the previously published versions, brings out most of the essential features of the story.[2] He wrote:

"The sea was always there. *Ṭhąkur* said in the beginning: 'How shall we improve it?' Then *Ṭhąkur* called to himself many of the kings of the sea and asked them how it was possible for earth to be raised from the sea bottom, but not one of them was able to do it. So *Ṭhąkur* first of all called Crab and said to him: 'You there, can you raise the earth from the bottom of this sea?' Crab replied: 'Yes, I can.' Then he set about carrying it up from the bottom of the sea, but it dissolved and he could do nothing. After him, *Ṭhąkur* called Tortoise. When he came *Ṭhąkur* said to him: 'You there, can you raise the earth from the bottom of this sea?' Then Tortoise replied, 'I shall raise it', but he also did not succeed. Last of all *Ṭhąkur* called Worm. When he came *Ṭhąkur* said to him: 'You there, can you raise the earth from the bottom of this sea?' Then Worm said: 'Yes, I can raise it; but you call Tortoise here and place a golden plate on his back. I will eat the mud on the bottom of the sea, and then excrete it at the other end on to the golden plate on Tortoise's back. In this way I shall raise the earth from the bottom of the sea.' And so indeed it was done. But the earth that had been raised was very uneven, and *Ṭhąkur* harrowed it to make it level. During the harrowing the sea came up where there were hollows, and where there were high places these became mountains and hills.

Then *Ṭhąkur* said: 'The world is made after a fashion, but how shall we improve it?' Then *Ṭhąkur* made two birds out of *siroṇ* grass seeds. They were called *Hąs* and *Hąsil*, goose and

[1] J. G. Frazer, *Folklore in the Old Testament*, Macmillan, 1918, Vol. I, p. 22.
[2] Durlob Murmu of Govindapur.

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one of the original twelve *khūt*. They are not allowed to have spots made on them and they will not be vaccinated, but they may be cicatrized; however, their daughters and sisters are not allowed to be tattooed until after they are married. The unmarried men are not allowed to wear any garment made from jute. They must not plaster their houses with any other than white earth; and they may not draw any pictures on the walls except plantain trees and date palms or figures that look like pictures of temples, drawn with three fingers only. They make their sacrifice at the time of the *Sohrae*; this is performed in the house, and they sacrifice a pig. One year it must be a male uncastrated pig and the next year a female, and if for any reason they cannot get hold of a pig they may sacrifice a black hen. They should sacrifice to their sub-clan spirit in the shelter of a white ant hill,[1] but in these days they bring some earth from the ant hill into the house and sacrifice there."

In a Sarenga schoolboy's essay on the origin of his own clan, he began by relating the creation of mankind and finally continued: "All the Sorens were the soldiers of the Kisku, who were the owners of the village at Campa Gaṛ. The Maṛṇḍi lived at Cirunala, and between the two villages there flowed the Sitanala river. They began to quarrel with each other because the people of the two villages had to use the same river for bathing and for drinking water. Now, since the Soren were the soldiers of the Kisku, they are like the Gurkhas of Nepal. Just as the Gurkhas are fierce and do not fear death, so too the Soren." So is virtue inculcated by fostering pride in the clan. One of the sub-clans of the Soren is the Poita Soren. *Poita* is the word—as pronounced by the Santals—for the sacred thread of the Brahmin. They relate that in the very early days the ancestors of the Soren were celebrating the *Jom Sim* festival and some of the company began to prepare the food and cook it. In imitation of Brahmin cooks they put on sacred threads and served all the people. From that time they became known as Poita Soren. When they sacrifice to their sub-clan spirit they sacrifice to him alone, and the offering has to consist of a male uncastrated pig. The rite is performed at sunrise. They may eat the flesh at any time during that day and the following night, and if they are unable to finish it they must bury it before the following sunrise

[1] For references to the sanctity of white ant hills see *Religion and Folklore of Northern India*, by W. Crooke, C.I.E., p. 380. The belief is widespread in India. "From early times the earth from an ant hill has been regarded as specially pure, representing 'the savour of the earth', and it was, and is, used in building altars."

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keep away marauding cattle and goats, and large earthen effigies of elephants and horses are set in position as worthy mounts for the spirits. The grove is not usually much more than a hundred yards away from the westernmost house in the village, but sometimes one finds that the dwellings of the people have been moved owing to sickness or some other reason and the grove remains in its original site. The determination of the site of the grove is an important element in founding a new village. Naturally there are few opportunities for observing the process at the present time, but the tradition is kept alive among the Santals, who tell that the choice of the site is made by the spirits themselves. They do so by taking possession of certain of the villagers and expressing their wishes through them. These men take stones and place them at the foot of three *sarjom* trees, which should be in a row, two for *Maraṅ Buru* and *Jaher Budhi* close together, and the third for the "Five and Six". Other trees are then set apart for a second female spirit known as *Gòsàč Era*, and also for the *pargana boṅga* and the boundary spirits.

Maraṅ Buru is the spirit who possesses the most clearly defined individuality. The name means "Great Mountain", but it is interesting to note that the word *buru* means not only a mountain but is also used for spirits in general, especially when it is coupled with the more usual *boṅga*. The use of *buru* combined with *boṅga* suggests that *buru* originally meant "mountain", that it was then used for "mountain spirit" and then as a synonym for *boṅga*. Another name for *Maraṅ Buru* is *Liṭa*, which is a proper name and does not appear to refer to any attributes. The name *Liṭa* is frequently used in stories and also in conversation, but it is not used in invocations. The Santal name for a rainbow is the "bow of *Liṭa*". *Maraṅ Buru* is invoked on all occasions when offerings are made, and he is a complete sharer in all the fortunes of the tribe, good and evil. He seems to be regarded as a kindly but capricious old gentleman. The references to him in the mythology clearly indicate his dominant position. He appeared on the scene at a very early stage in the life of the first pair. He found them living in a state of innocence and told them that they had not yet learnt to taste the joys of life. After introducing himself to them as their grandfather and so establishing an intimate relationship between himself and them, he taught them how to brew beer and left them for a few days. When he returned he chuckled to see the change in their appearance, for during his absence they had become drunken.

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In that condition they had for the first time experienced sexual intercourse and, realizing their nakedness, they had clothed themselves. He taught them that they must always offer beer to him when they invoked his name.

The Old Lady of the Sacred Grove, *Jaher Budhi*, is by contrast a shadowy person. Bodding reports[1] that her name is said to be *Ram sąlgi*, but except for the fact that offerings are made to her along with those made to *Maraṅ Buru* at festivals, little is known about her. The same may be said of the "Five and Six", who are thought of as a family of five brothers and one sister. It is only to the "Five" that offerings are made, and hence they are also frequently referred to as the "Five." One sacrifice suffices for them all. The "Five" are greatly feared because they are likely to cause some swift calamity when they are displeased.

The *Mąṅjhi thaṅ*, the shrine of the spirits of the departed headmen, is the second of the sacred places in which the cult of the tribe is localized. The site is supposed to be fixed in much the same manner as that of the sacred grove. Local legends grow up round these shrines, and they exhibit many variations. Often they are situated somewhere near the centre of the village, to one side of the main street. In some instances the shrine consists of a raised mud platform over which there is a well-kept thatched roof supported on four corner posts and a central upright post about five feet high. In other cases it consists of a cleared space at the foot of a tree, and the roof of thatch is erected only at the times when sacrifices are offered. In some parts each departed headman is commemorated by a small stone which is placed in the shrine at the time of his death ceremonies, but in this area it is not possible to reckon the number of generations since the foundation of a village by the presence or absence of stones. Many of the villages have a history which extends back over more than six generations, and it appears that the stones which may have been placed in the past do not retain their sacredness over so long a period, and they have been removed. At the present time the immediate ancestors and also the original founder, revered as *Mąṅjhi haṛam*, are honoured by setting up the clay effigies of elephants or horses in their names. Even the site may be shifted under the influence of new ideas. Thus in the purely Santal village of Jamedia there is a shrine in the village street not far from the headman's house which has been in its present position for about fifteen years. The villagers referred to it as the *Mąṅjhi*

[1] Bodding, *Santali Dictionary*, Vol. III, p. 228.

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The personality of *Maran Buru* overshadows that of the Supreme Being in the consciousness of the Santals. The latter is universally acknowledged as the Creator, but he is far removed. *Maran Buru* is the one who has made them what they are today. In the folk-tales there are frequent references to the Supreme Being in his character as the merciful provider, but these are stories of what happened "a long time ago". One example, in which the Supreme Being came and worked with the two sons of a widow and so altered their fortunes, has been translated above.[1] In another story which tells of a child who was left an orphan, he came down in the form of a man in order to comfort the child.[2] Sometimes in folk-tales extraordinary events are attributed to the action of the Supreme Being, as in a story that relates how a woman gave birth to a mongoose and one of her fellow villagers said: "This is indeed wonderful, that God should cause an animal to be born in the womb of a woman."[3]

Some of the names of the Supreme Being reveal the influence of the surrounding culture and reflect certain elements in Santal belief. The word *Thakur* in Bengali, meaning "one who is worthy of worship", is applied indifferently to a god, an image, a Brahmin caste and any Brahmin cook. Santals sometimes apply it to spirits in general, but they usually reserve it as a term for the Creator. It is so used in a saying that is current in the area which explains why the Santals may not celebrate their Spring festival until after the corresponding Hindu festival, the Dol Jatra or Holi Puja, has been held. If the Santals do not wait till the Hindu festival is over, they say that *Thakur* will be offered what has been left over from the offerings to the *boŋgas*. Here *Thakur* is undoubtedly regarded as the Lord of the *boŋgas* and is incidentally identified with Sri Krishna, in whose honour the Dol Jatra is celebrated. In some parts the name *Thakur Jiu* is used, *jiu* connoting "spirit" in the sense of the life principle. The word *jiu* is uncommon, the usual form of the term being *jivi*, but it is used as a suffix in the word *mac-jiu*, literally "mother spirit", which is the common word for a woman. *Thakur Jiu*, which should perhaps have been printed as one word, is the term used in the printed account of the Traditions, and as these were first published in 1887, its subsequent currency may be due in some measure to that fact.

[1] See Chapter 5, p. 53.

[2] Bodding, *Santal Folk-Tales*, Vol. III, p. 73. Finding out why the child wept, he caused the child's mother to appear to him, but first told him not to weep or he would die.

[3] Bodding, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 80.

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There are many individuals famed in some degree as physicians. Some are equivalent to the general practitioners of the West, while others are specialists who possess remedies for particular diseases. There are others who might be described as veterinary physicians. When, however, an illness persists the patient and the relatives suspect that some supernatural agency is at work, and they then call in the *ojha*, or magician. The *ojha* is not necessarily a Santal, though there are now so many Santals who are learned in *ojha* art that it is usually possible for a Santal to be called. They are men possessed of special powers who have gone through a period of training, followed by an initiation ceremony at the hands of an *ojha*, and they in turn pass on their knowledge to their own disciples. Tradition says that formerly this training was strenuous and serious. It took the form of a course that lasted from May until October, the time of the *Dāsāĕ*, which is the same as the Dasserah festival of North India and the Durga Puja in Bengal. Throughout this period the disciples had to attend at the house of the *ojha* every evening until finally they were initiated. At the conclusion of this ceremony the *ojha* used to take his disciples on a begging expedition through the surrounding villages on three successive days.

These begging parties are a familiar sight in the countryside during *Dāsāĕ*, and they represent almost all that is left of the old initiation schools conducted by the *ojhas*. Every village has its bands of youths who meet each night for a month to practise the songs and dances and then go out to collect rice and cash from the neighbours. It is at this time that the *buaĭ* is used. When the young men sally forth they are dressed in picturesque fashion. On this occasion alone men are permitted to wear women's dress. They put on *saṛis* shaped like a skirt and a small waistcoat, a garment worn by the women in many parts of North India, though it is not normally worn in Bengal. They also don earrings, bangles and anklets, while on their heads they wear turbans in which they fasten peacock feathers.

These bands have little relation to the *ojhas* and they operate under their own leaders. One of the links remaining between this practice and the *ojhas* is the reference in some of the songs to the old *gurus* of the magicians, and in particular the original *guru*, a mythological person named Kąmru. The name may possibly refer to a person who came from the western districts of Assam, a region known as Kamrup, but he is now entirely mythical. He is regarded as the originator of magical knowledge and as belonging to the race of *bongas*. According to one version, he is a

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son of the god Siva.[1] In one of the songs sung by the *Dāsāĕ* youths at Sarenga the first verses are as follows:

> Which *guru* has a silver stick, sister, O sister,
> In the middle of the Kasai river, sister, O sister,
> The silver stick with a sound like tinkling bells?
>
> *Dhorom guru* has a silver stick, sister, O sister,
> In the middle of the Kasai river, sister, O sister,
> The silver stick which sounds like tinkling bells.[2]

The mention of *Dhorom* as the first *guru* links *Dāsāĕ* lore with a god who is prominent in the cult of the earth mother, a cult that is common among the Hindu lower castes and among many of the Central India tribes, for whom the Dasserah is one of the important festivals of the year. The song proceeds to repeat the same question twelve times in all—the number twelve here again symbolizes completeness—and the answer is repeated with a different name each time. The names of the *gurus* as they are repeated at Sarenga are Dhorom, Siba (Siva), Kamru, Sidho, Gandu, Rohora, Bati, Buaŋ, Lokhon, Bhadu, Ratu and Ramjit. The first eight names are mythical or symbolic, while the name Lokhon connects the song with local tradition, and Ramjit was the name of the last leader of the band before the present one. The names standing between these two also commemorate local *Dāsāĕ* leaders.

The practice by which *ojhas* are made today is informal and usually results from the attachment of a youth to an *ojha* as his servant for an unspecified period. There is a considerable amount of rivalry among the *ojhas*, who endeavour to steal a march on each other and especially to get hold of the powers of dead magicians. The following story, a literal translation of one that was current in the area, illustrates the nature of the power that they wield: "One day a man who had set out for his work in the jungle—he was a jungle keeper—saw three slender *sarjom* trees tied together and put down in the path at a cross-roads. He thought to himself: 'Now who could it be who was stealing trees from the jungle?' Saying this, he picked up the sticks and went on to the jungle. When he arrived there he thought: 'There is no need for me to carry these sticks round with me all the time; I will put them down here and pick them up when I am on my

[1] For a full discussion see Bodding, *Studies in Santal Medicine and Connected Folklore*, *Memoirs of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. X.
[2] See Appendix B, No. 15.

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At sunset the unmarried men of the village bathe and then go to the nearby forest, from which they cut and bring back two branches of the *karam* tree. These branches, known as "virgin" *karam*, are set upright in two holes dug for the purpose. A piece of cloth is placed over the branches and a small light is lit in front of them. After the preliminary dancing one of the village elders recites the myth of the *Karam*, beginning from the creation myth; the story of the origin of the world is ordinarily referred to as the *Karam binti*. The recital is followed by another dance, which lasts through the night and is changed at cockcrow. The celebration continues till sunrise, when the branches are taken down to the water near the village by the same young men who brought them from the forest on the evening before. The youths immerse themselves, and the branches are floated away in a manner similar to that employed in floating away the bones of the dead.

The myth relates the story of the *Karam* to their own tribal history, and, as one finds in all Santal myths, memories of early wanderings are prominent. The following version was related by Durlob Murmu,[1] and it forms a continuation to the creation story:

"The name of Pilcu Haṛam and Pilcu Buḍhi's eldest son was Karmu Senor Siń. The eldest daughter was Hisi. They had two sons, who were called Karmu and Dharmu. Now Karmu was of the Häsläk' clan, and their maternal uncles were the Kisku *rajas* and the Maṛmḍi rich men. The Kisku lived at Campagor and the Maṛmḍi lived at Cirnlagor,[2] and between the two villages flowed the Sitanala river. The people from both villages used to go to the river for their bathing and drinking water. There was a quarrel between them over a bride, and while the fight was on the Kisku killed the father of Karmu and Dharmu. After this they fell into great want. One day they went out to beg and were on the way to Campanagar. They came to the banks of a river, and Dharmu lay down at the foot of a *karam* tree and fell asleep. The name of the river was Tatijhari—it was the place where *Maraṅ Buru* had first woven cloth garments. Below that place he had made a small embankment, and that place was called the Saḍoyar valley; just below it he had bathed, and so the place was known as Bathing river. That river had sprung from the Lope mountain hard by the Bell banyan tree, and its waters flowed towards the sunrise.

[1] See Chapter 6, p. 63, footnote 2. [2] Cf. reference in Chapter 6, p. 72.